

## ISMA'ILISM IN MULTAN AND SIND

DR. ANSAR ZAHID KHAN

The break-up of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate brought into being a number of independent provincial dynasties during the ninth and tenth centuries, mainly due to the working of the internal forces which in some cases assumed the form of heterodox syncretic movements i.e., Shī'ism and Ismā'ilism. The anti-Arab Shu'ābiyah sentiment appears to have played an important part in this development.<sup>1</sup> However, the Arab hierarchy was not totally destroyed for the first provincial dynasties such as the Ṭāhirids of Khurasan, the Habbārīds of Maṣūrah and the Qurayshites of Multan were Arab in their origin. Gradually Arab rule was replaced by local dynasties. In Multan and Sind this change coincided with the rise of Ismā'ilis to power.

The Ismā'ili rule over Multan and Sind and later the continuation of their movement under the Sumrah chiefs during the Sultanate period is sketchy in historical data. For this reason some scholars have designated this age as the 'Dark Period of the History of Sind'.<sup>2</sup> In the following pages an attempt has been made to evaluate the role of the Ismā'ili movement in the region and to review its development.

1 The problem is not so simple. The heterodox movement with its Shu'ūbiyah background always tried to establish the rule of the house of 'Alī while the supporters of the orthodox Caliphate such as the Sāssānids and the Ghaznawids created their own independent kingdoms. While non-Arab rulers such as the Buwayhids came to power on the understanding of restoring the house of 'Alī to power.

2 See Daudpotah, A Dark Period in the History of Sind, *Proceedings of Pakistan Historical Records and Archives Commission*, 1954, pp. 23, 26-28.

Chronologically speaking the movement may be divided into three distinct phases, the early phase leading to the establishment of Ismā'ili political hegemony over Multan and Sind. The second was marked with internal dissensions and led to their loss of political power. The final stage saw the emergence of the Nizārian sect of Ismā'ilis. The final stage may further be sub-divided into two periods, the Sumrah period of Sind when these chiefs ruled in South-Eastern Sind and the later period when the sect became a dwindling minority with increasing syncretic tendencies, towards some Hindu beliefs and manners.

The region of Multan and Sind situated at the periphery of the Caliphate had ever been a place of refuge for dissenters and rebels.<sup>1</sup> Besides its distance the region possessed a congenial atmosphere for the spread of Ismā'ili da'wat. The majority of the people, Buddhists or Brahmans, believed in ḥulūl and tanāsukh (incarnation and transmigration) the two cardinal principles of the new movement. Moreover in a country where the veneration of the high born Brahman and Buddh bhikshu was traditional<sup>2</sup>, sādāt, the progeny of the Prophet relentlessly pursued by the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids, won general sympathy for themselves and their cause. The earlier Muslim rulers, the Caliphs or local chiefs fearing a loss of revenue due to conversion to Islam discouraged proselytizing activities and allowed continuation of a privileged society. Thus the non-Muslims, the majority

1 'Abd Allāh s/o Aghtar escaped to Sind and was given shelter by 'Umar b. Hafz, the 'Abbāsid governor of Sind in the reign of Maṣūrah (d. 774) Ibn Athīr, *Al-Kāmil*, Lieden, Vol. V, pp. 455-456.

It is said that the sons of Ismā'il b. Ja'far the Ismā'ili Imām were sent to the borders of Qandahār and Sind to escape the persecution of the Caliph Maṣūrah.

2 Chagh the Brahman ruler of Sind revered the Sampāni of Sammah Sāwandī, Chagh Nāmāh, ed. Daudpotah, pp. 210, 215-216.

3 Muḥammad b. Qāsim continued the traditional policy about the Jāts and other tribes and accepted the pre-eminence of the Brahmans. See Chagh Nāmāh, pp. 210, 212, 215-216.



of the people, still suffering from social injustices were ready to listen to the new missionaries who promised them a better deal.<sup>1</sup>

The Ismā'īlī *da'wat* in this region started near the end of the ninth century when Haytham was sent by Ḥusayn in 270/883.<sup>2</sup> After nearly a century during which little is known about their activities, the Ismā'īlīs were able to capture power in Multan. Jalam b. Shaybān (also Jallah or Ḥalīm b. Shaybān)<sup>3</sup> was sent by the Fāṭimid Caliph and probably seized Multan between 349 and 375 H./985 A.C. Jalam b. Shaybān came with a contingent. The success of such an expedition pre-supposes existence of a strong Ismā'īlī influence both at Multan and in Sind.

It may be noted that during the era of the Fāṭimid Caliphs, the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* recorded all its success in countries where Islam was already dominant e.g. North Africa, portions of Arabia, Iran and Sind. For their dogmas based on the veneration of the house of 'Alī could be explained easily to a Muslim only. They came as champions of justice and true faith, therefore, they had to show themselves as more staunch Muslims than their predecessors. That is why Jalam b. Shaybān ordered the destruction of the temple and idol of Multan and prohibited the Hindus from bathing in the holy pond.<sup>4</sup> a policy in wide contrast to that of Muḥammad b.

1 Some scholars have described the Shi'ite and Ismā'īlī movements as symbolising equality and justice. See L. Massigion. Dasmations; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, see also, Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, London, 1953 p. 209.

2 Ḥusayn was the third and the last of *ā'imah-i-mosturīn*. He had sent Abu al-Qasim to Yemen. After capturing Yemen Abu al-Qasim sent missionaries to different regions including Sind. See Zahid 'Alī, *Fatmī'in-i-Miqr*, Vol. I, pp. 69-71. See Hollister, *op. cit*, p. 209.

3 Cf. Ivanow, *Ismailis and Qarmatians*, *JBBARS* 1940, pp. 76-77; Al-Biruni, *India*, Eng. Tr., Sachau, pp. 116-117; 'Uyūn al-Akḥbār, 6/16.

4 Al-Birūnī, *India*, Vol. II. pp. 116-117.

Qāsim and the Umayyad Caliphs.<sup>1</sup> This change in the policy might have been due to the conversion of the majority of the people to the new Muslim sect which enabled them to face the attacks of the neighbouring Hindu chiefs without having recourse to threats of destroying the idol as was the custom of their predecessors.<sup>2</sup> In the same way they closed the mosque built under the Umayyad rule.<sup>3</sup> Both the measures aimed at ditinguishing their rule from the unjust rule of the Umayyad dynasty.

However, it is very intriguing that the powerful Hindū-Shāhiyah dynasty in the north and the neighbouring Rajput *rajahs* felt no offence at this sacrilege. Paucity of information does not allow any clear evaluation of this development for the Ismā'īlīs did not enjoy the military prestige of Maḥmūd of Ghaznah who notwithstanding his military might had to face resistance in his Somnath expedition. Probably the number of non-Ismā'īlī Muslims at Multan was large enough and Jalam b. Shaybān did not wish to alienate them completely by destroying a mosque. However, closing down of the Umayyad mosque showed their anti-Umayyad feeling as well as their disassociation from that stigmatized family.

Jalam b. Shaybān was another of the *dā'īs* who became ruler of a far off Ismā'īlī state.<sup>4</sup> It also proved the complete control of

1 Al-Birūnī has recorded an anecdote describing the sale of the idols seized from by the Caliph Mu'āwiyah to the non-Muslim chiefs of Sind. *India*, Vol. I, p. 124.

Muḥammad b. Qāsim allowed the non-Muslims complete religious, social and economic freedom, and did not disturb their social structure.

2 It was only a short while ago that the rulers of Multan used this strategem to keep the Hindu chiefs at bay. Al-Iṣṭakhri (Elliot, Susil Gupta ed. p. 36.) mention such a practice.

3 Al-Birūnī, *India*, Vol. I, pp. 116-117.

4 It is interesting to note that the early *ṣūfī-shaykhs* particularly the Subrawardis also showed similar non-secular attitude. It is said that Shāykh Bahā al-Dīn Zakariyyā invited Sultan Iltutmish of Delhi to attack Multan for its



the Ismā'īlī *imāms* over such distant regions and shows people's total loyalty to the far off *imāms*.

Another interesting point is that the Ismā'īlī success in Multan preceded their success in Maṣṣūrah, Shi'ite influence had already permeated the society in Sind, for in spite of the existence of Zāhiri Muḥaddithī dogma in Maṣṣūrah, Baṣṣhārī found the rulers of Sind often reciting *khuṭbah* in the name of the Daylami ruler 'Aḍad al-Dawlah. Probably for some time these *Ithnā 'ash'ariyah* and Zāhiri Muḥaddithī dogmas held back the Ismā'īlī flood but only for a short while, for shortly afterwards Sind was mentioned under the *mulāḥidahs*, a term used to denote the Ismā'īlīs. As Jalam b. Shaybān was the official emissary of the *imām* he could have been entrusted with overall command of the whole of Multan, Sind and Hind. But shortly later the kingdoms of Multan and Maṣṣūrah appeared separate. The ruler of Maṣṣūrah, if he was an Ismā'īlī did not come to the help of Shaykh Dāwūd b. Naṣr, the ruler of Multan against the two attacks of Maḥmūd<sup>1</sup>. It seems that after Jalam b. Shaybān the position of the *dā'i* was combined with that of some chiefs, who could have been of Arab origin.

The Druse epistle to Rajah Sumar b. Bal, the *dā'i* designate for 'Multan and all those regions of Hind' (including Sind), shows that Multan occupied more important position than Maṣṣūrah in the

(Continued from page 4)

ruler Qubāḥīh was not enthusiastic about Islam. Minhāj al-Dīn Sirāj *Fawā'id al-Fuwad*, p. 119.

Later Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥdūm-i-Jahāniyān Jahān Gasht of Uchh showed a similar attitude, in the time of Tughluq dynasty and when a Hindu Hamūn refused to declare himself a Muslim after reciting the *kalimah*, he had him beheaded.

<sup>1</sup> Nazim, *Sultan Mahmud and his times*.

It may be pointed out that Maḥmūd did not order any general massacre of the *mulāḥidah* of Maṣṣūrah as was done by him at Multan. Another interesting question is whether the Jats who looted Maḥmūd's soldiers, a fact which made Maḥmūd organize his last expedition to the sub-continent in 1026. Maḥmūd punished them severely and it reminds one of his action against the *mulāḥidah* of Multan.

scheme of Ismā'īlī *da'wat* in the Subcontinent. But in spite of Multan's early conversion to Ismā'īlī beliefs and the prominence enjoyed by it as the seat of the main *dā'is* of the movement it was lost to Ismā'ilism before Sind. Multan's prominence in the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* continued upto the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Pir Shams Sabzwāri one of the *hujjats* settled at Multan. As he had come via Badakhshan and Kashmir it is likely that he combined the *da'wat* of those regions with that of Multan. In the next century the centre shifted towards Uchh, a region adjacent to Multan. In this way since the last quarter of the tenth century till the fifteenth century Multan and its surrounding area continued as centres of Ismā'īlī movement. This adherence to the region with the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* which made the later Ismā'īlīs e.g. the Nizārians, in order to show themselves as the true successors of early Ismā'īlīs, adopt Multan as their head-quarters even though the majority of the people had long ceased to follow their tenets. A change of centre might have spotlighted the growing weakness of the movement leading to disheartening of the remaining followers. Besides this during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Ismā'īlī Sūmrah chiefs were dominant in Sind and therefore concerted efforts were made to win back the lost territory of Multan. Moreover, Multan and Uchh were centres of the Suhrawardī *ṣūfis*, main opponents of the Ismā'īlīs, and it was a better strategy to fight their activities from their very centres.

Jalam b. Shaybān probably ruled for a very short period and his region was followed by a dynastic rule. Such a combination of chieftainship with religious dignity was not unknown to the early Ismā'īlī *imāms* and is still a familiar practice with Ismā'īlīs of Central Asia and the Subcontinent.<sup>1</sup> Scarcity of information does not allow one to find out the ethnological associations of these

<sup>1</sup> The Suhaylids of Yemen were another such family.

See also Agha Khan, *The Memoirs*, 1954 New York, pp. 22-24. See also Ivanow, *The Truth Worshipers of Kurdistan*, 1953 Holland, p. 19. It may be noted that somewhat parallel developments were discernable in the Ismā'īlī movement in Kurdistan, Eastern Persia and Sind.



early rulers of Sind and Multan. Similarity in the names of Rajah Sūmar<sup>1</sup> to whom the Druse epistle was addressed, Kharfif, the ruler of Maṣūrah at the time of Maḥmūd's attack<sup>2</sup> (early eleventh century) and Chanisar, the ruler of Daybul defeated by Jalāl al-Din Mankbarni in 1221-22 A.C.<sup>3</sup> with the nomenclature of the Sūmrah chiefs found in the annals has led modern scholars to regard them as Sūmrah chiefs. This would mean that Sūmrah rule lasted from the eleventh century to the fifteenth century, a very long period of dynastic rule. Lack of historical corroboration adds to the confusion. There is a possibility of more than one branch of the Sūmrah dynasty ruling at different times and periods and their cumulative rule could have spread over such a long period.<sup>4</sup>

There is another possibility that even during the life time of Jalam b. Shaybān the separate status of the two kingdoms was maintained and the *dā'i* and ruler of Multan possessed only a spiritual or religious superiority over the ruler of Maṣūrah. The other alternative seems to be the re-assertion of centrifugal tendencies of the two regions.

A prominent characteristic of religio-political movements have

1 Elliot Historical Notes, *Historian of Sind*, Susil Gupta, ed. p. 92, n. 209.

Cf. Doudpotah, Notes, *Tarikh-i-Sindh*, pp. 286-294.

Haig, Ibn-i-Batutah in Sind, *J.R.A.S.*, Vol. 19, p. 393.

Haig, Indus Delta Country. p. 76

See also Ibn-i-Batutah, *Rahilah*, Eng. Tr., p. 185.

*Tuhfat al-Kirām*, Vol. III, p. 67.

Riaz ul-Islam. The Rise of the Sammah, *Islamic Culture*, Oct. 1948. Abu Zafar Nadwi, *Tarikh-i-Ind Azamgarh*, 1947, pp. 277 et. seq.

2 *Diwān-i-Farra'hi*, Kabul ed. p. 74.

3 Minhaj al-Din Siraj, *Tabaqāt-i-Nāgiri*, Vol. III, p. 523.

4 The annals refer to the gathering of tribes at Tharri (a common Sindhi name for any place of antique ruins, Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History* p. 100) in the reign 'Abd al-Raghīd. (Ma'gūm, *Tarikh-i-Sindh*, Poona ed., p. 60). Besides this there are references to various factions of the ruling family who came to power (*Tarikh-i-Sindh*, p. 60). If Sumār b. Bāl was a Sumrah chief, the above mentioned hypothesis is further strengthened.

been their regional and ethnical affiliations. It was true of Ismā'ilism as well. The Ismā'ilis had established their power in North Africa, Yemen, Sind-Multan. In Africa they won power with the help of the tribe of Katāmah. In Sind-Multan a similar phenomenon was witnessed. The Ismā'ili *dā'is* probably made use of the regional and parochial tendencies and won the support of powerful tribes promising them a better and just deal. The oppressed Jāts, joined by the newly converted Rajput tribes under the hegemony of the Sūmrahs could have been such a possible and winning combination. For if Sūmar b. Bāl was a Sūmrah chief his tribe should have commanded a strong position to be entrusted with the task of recovering and restoring the lost position of the true 'faith'.

As stated earlier the Ismā'ili *da'wat* after a hundred years of proselytizing activity succeeded in capturing power. However, their political rule had a chequered career. After a brief rule of the decades they had to face the invasions of Maḥmūd of Ghazni. In 1010 A. C. Multan was annexed to the Ghaznawid empire. In the face of this catastrophe the Ismā'ili efforts at recovery were seriously thwarted by an internal convulsion. The theories of *ḥulūl* and *tanāsukh* and attempts at deification of the Imām Ḥākīm, the Fātimid Caliph (996-1021 A. C.), an extremist reaction of the Ismā'ili beliefs—led to the emergence of the Druses, the second such group to break off from the original movement, the Qarmatians being the first. The basic tenets of the Druse beliefs appeared during the last years of Ḥākīm's reign. He was proclaimed as God incarnate and as the 'Final incarnation'.<sup>1</sup> This claim engendered a serious controversy in the Ismā'ili movement. But as Ḥākīm was the *imām* nobody could dare to challenge his decisions and claims, and it may be presumed throughout the Islamic world (including Sind and Multan) wherever the Ismā'ili *da'wat* existed Ḥākīm's orders proclaiming himself as God incar-

1 *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion*, Vol. VII, p. 198, XI, p. 456.  
*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. VII; p. 681.



nate were propagated. In the same way one may conclude that the bitter controversy found its echo in this region as well. This internal dissension partly explains Ismā'ilī failure against Maḥmūd. Ḥākim's death complicated the matter further. Eventually believers in Ḥākim's claims to divinity were compelled to retreat to the safe fastnesses of the Jabal in Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> However, they continued to seek support for their beliefs and tried to rally the Ismā'ilīs of distant regions to their beliefs. The famous epistle of Muktāna Bahā al-Dīn (also Bahā al-Dīn Muktāni)<sup>2</sup> the chief apostle of Ḥamzah, the *dā'i* of Ḥākim and the principal compiler of the Druse writings, addressed in the year 423 H. (1032 A.C.), to the Unitarians of Multan and Hindustan in general and to Shaykh Ibn Sumār Raja Bal in particular,<sup>3</sup> shows an attempt by the moderate and reformed Druse group<sup>3</sup> to win support in this region.

It means that the three decades of orthodox rule of the Ghaznavids providing a superior intellectual life with better economic and social conditions created serious divisions among the Ismā'ilīs. At the same time the early *ṣūfī* shaykhs such as Shaykh Ismā'il (d. 448/1056). Shaykh 'Uthmān Ḥujwiyri (d. 1009-1072) had successfully started missionary work from Lahore and with official patronage their efforts were sure to meet success.<sup>4</sup> This change affected the ruling house of Multan as well. 'Abd Allāh, grandson of Dawūd, the ruler captured by Maḥmūd, probably headed a group which had deviated from their former

1 *Encyclopaedia of Ethics and Religion*, Vol. XI, p. 456. Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature*, London, 1933, p. 45, see also Hollister *op. cit.*, pp. 232-237.

2 Elliot, *op. cit.* p. 92.

3 The Druses are said to be divided into two groups. Muktāna Bahā al-Dīn, the emissary of Ḥamzah tried to check the exaggerated claims of al-Drāzī. See *Inn'al Salah an' al-Faḥshā wa 'l-Munkir an'l-Zāhir wa 'l-Bātin*, vide Zahid Ali, *Fatimī'in-l-Miqr*, Vol. II, pp. 161-167; see also Vol. I, p. 450. Elliot, *Historical Notes*, Vol. I, pp. 489 *et. seq.* Qureshi, I. H., *Muslim Community*, pp. 45-47.

4 Moin al-Haq, Early *Ṣūfī* Shaykhs, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. xxii, part I, p. 1-18.

beliefs. The extent of this deviation is not clear. It could have been an attempt on the part of 'Abd Allāh to establish a purely dynastic rule without securing the sanction of the *imām*. But in view of the Druse epistle it actually meant their swerving from acceptance of Ḥākim's divinity. Bahā al-Dīn wanted 'the disciples of the doctrines of holiness and of unity' (*muwwahidīn*) to 'be distinguished from the party of bewilderment, contradiction, ingenuity, and rebellion.'<sup>1</sup> It means that the Ismā'ilīs of Multan and Sind had started rejecting the exaggerated claims of Ḥākim. It may be noted that Bahā al-Dīn wanted them to rejoin the ranks of unitarians (*muwwahidīn*) a term used by the Druses to distinguish themselves from *mū'minīn* (*Ithna'ash'ari Shī'ahs*) and Muslims or people of *Zāhir* i.e. the Sunnis. Nowhere he addressed them as people of *Zāhir*. Only the Ismā'ilīs following the Fātimid Caliphs after Ḥākim could be described as rebels and people of contradiction and obstinacy.

The above epistle also points to the fact that Maḥmūd had thoroughly uprooted the house of Dāwūd. The leniency shown by Mas'ūd and the confusion and civil war following his death enabled the remaining members of Dāwūd's family to make efforts to establish their own rule. The vacuum caused by the removal of Dāwūd and his house by Maḥmūd had left the *da'wat* leaderless, a position which could not be allowed to be prolonged... A person sent from abroad could have attracted attention and consequent retaliatory action by Maḥmūd.<sup>2</sup> If a local person had to be appointed he had to be a man commanding strong loyalty of his followers—though the members of the faith in India were noted for their complete subservience to the will of the *imām*<sup>2</sup> and they could be expected to show reverence to any person appointed by the *imām* as their chief irrespective of his family or lineage.

1 Maḥmūd publicly burnt the epistle and robe of honour sent by the Fātimid Caliphs al-Zāhir. He also executed Tabirati, an Ismā'ilī missionary in Khurasan.

2 This characteristic of Indian Ismā'ilīs was noticed by the Mast'alian *imāms* also.



Nevertheless in the prevalent tribal set-up a strong tribal chief could have suited their purpose well. When the dissensions arose, the Druses tried to use one of such chiefs. They probably tried to secure his loyalties by affirming his true descent from Bothro and Houdelhela, perhaps the original ancestors of these tribes and their chiefs and occupying some important position in the local Ismā'īlī traditions. Rājah Bāl (Pal) was mentioned as the son of Sumār (probably a variation of Sūmrah). The word Sumār might have been a tribal denomination. As the Sūmrah chiefs are stated to have come to power just after the break-up of the Ghaznawid empire it may be safely concluded that Rājah Pal was a Sūmrah the tribe whose chiefs were entrusted with the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* by Hākim (after 1010 A.C.).<sup>1</sup>

The members of the erstwhile ruling family were found lacking in enthusiasm for the cause of Ismā'īlism. With the limited resources at their disposal and the vast missionary propaganda involved they could not be expected to score any remarkable success, against their rich and powerful rivals of Cairo. Among them al-Zāhir (1021-1036) seems to have embarked upon a vigorous policy of winning new converts. He even tried to develop good relations with Maḥmūd<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the Ismā'īlī *imāms* of Cairo seemed to have succeeded in re-establishing their control over the Ismā'īlīs of Multan and Sind so firmly that even after the fall of the Ismā'īlī state of Bahrayn (1082 A.C.) the *imāms* of Cairo continued to receive *zakāt* from this region.<sup>2</sup>

The Ismā'īlī efforts at recovering their lost position started with the appointment of Ibn Sumār Raja Pal. In 1032 A.C. conflict between the pro-Druse and the pro-Cairo sections became very acute. It is said that in 1051 A.C. the power of the Ghaznawids under 'Abd al-Rashīd became so weak that the Sūmrahs of Sind gathered together at Tharri in lower Sind and selected Sūmrah

<sup>1</sup> However, the Ismā'īlī sources are silent on this point.

<sup>2</sup> See Elliot, Vol. I, pp. 487 *et. seq.*  
Hollister, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

as their chief. Sumrah married the daughter of Sa'd, a powerful feudal lord, and as suggested by his name probably an Arab. Out of this matrimonial alliance came the Sūmrah dynasty which continued to rule parts of Sind till they were ousted by the Sammahs (middle of the fourteenth century).

The selection of Sūmrah without the prior sanction of the *imām* was unprecedented in the history of the Ismā'īlī movement and testifies to the weakening of the authority of the *imām*, though after the selection confirmation from the *imām* could have been acquired. As the chief was selected from a family which was already working as the *shaykh* of the movement in Multan, the approval of the *imām* posed no problem or perhaps the approval of the *shaykh* of Multan who held the status of *hujjat* was sufficient.

The marriage of Sūmrah of Sind with the daughter of Sād throws light on another aspect of the movement. The Ismā'īlīs were noted for making changes in their policies according to circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Maḥmūd is said to have uprooted Arab families, most likely the Ismā'īlī Arab families. The Ismā'īlīs on their part might have tried to win over these descendants of the Arab settlers. In fact they could have posed as champions of anti-Turk or anti-Ghaznawid sentiments. In this resurgence of Ismā'īlism Sūmrah Rajputs played the leading role.

The chequered career of Ismā'īlī *da'wat* in this region suffered another eclipse at the hands of Muḥammad Ghūrī. Strangely enough at this time as well there seemed no military co-operation between the Ismā'īlīs of Multan and Maṣūrah. The chronicles mention Ghūrī conflict with the *mulāḥidah* of Multan but they are silent about the *mulāḥidah* of Sind. Perhaps the *mulāḥidah* of Sind were already on the retreat and the chroniclers did not give any weight to their position.

Just as in the case of Maḥmūd's invasion the Ismā'īlīs were seriously afflicted with internecine conflicts and quarrels. Another

<sup>1</sup> Agha Khan, *The Memoirs*, p. 24.



great rift had also weakened the movement. They became divided into Must, 'alwi and Nizāri sects (1092 A. C.). The former gained power in Egypt and continued to control Yemen and thence penetrated into Gujarat while the Nizāris ably led by Ḥasan b. Sabbāḥ secured a strong base at Alamut and forged an alliance with the old group of dissenters, the Qarmatians. Out of this alliance were born the Assassins. For the next seven decades the Nizāris gradually began to gain ascendancy in Iran, Sind and Multan. It may be pointed out that *zakat* payment from Sind and Multan to Cairo *imāms* ceased after 1082 A. C. For the next eighty years the Nizāri missionaries worked hard and had the better of their rivals. The Must'alāwī *da'wat* died out because it failed to grow with the times—a basic characteristic of the Ismā'īlī movement, and was unable to face the combined challenge of Turkish warriors and *ṣūfī* missionaries. Later the Nizārians were given a new lease of life by the sweeping changes introduced by Ḥasan 'ala *Dhikrihi* al-Salām (1162-1166). *Qiyāmat* was declared to have been established, hence there was no need of any *sharī'at* and therefore the *imām* became the main spring of authority and law.<sup>1</sup> These declarations and other changes introduced by him marked the end of the era of Ḥasan b. Sabbāḥ. Nizāri Ismā'ilism now acquired a distinct identity of its own. At the same time struggle for unifying the Ismā'ilīs of the East was virtually over. But still opposition was not completely stamped out and thus Ḥasan *Dhikrihi* al-Salām sent a new *Hujjat* Pir Nūr al-Dīn whose reforms and efforts marked an important milestone in the development of this movement.

The abrogation of *sharī'at* opened new possibilities for the missionaries. Pir Nūr al-Dīn also known as Nūr Satgur and Sayyid-i-Sādāt made Gujarat his head quarters and initiated a new system of faith known as *Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaḳīm* or *Sat-Panth* combining the Ismā'īlī beliefs with the Vedantic notions.<sup>2</sup> The

1 Faḍīl 'Alī, *Nūr-i-Mubīn*, p. 399; vide Zahid Ali, *Futūḥ* Vol. II, p. 177.

2 Faridi, *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, p. 38; Najm al-Ghani, *Madhāhib al-Islām*, Rampur, p. 335. See also G. Allana, *Sumran ji dawr ji Sindhi Shā'iri*, *Mihran*, Vol. IX, 1962, p. 149.

change in the headquarters of the *hujjat* from Sind to Gujarat reflected the decreasing hold of the Ismā'īlī beliefs in Sind and therefore a consequent rise in the importance of Gujarat in the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* was natural where the syncretisation of Ismā'īlī and Hindu beliefs was bound to score some success. The pronounced syncretic tendency now clearly discernable in the movement supports this thesis. Another possibility is that the Ismā'īlīs of Sind were not ready to accept the interpretations of *Dhikrihi* al-Salām and therefore his *hujjat* was compelled to shift the venue of his activities to the more congenial atmosphere of Gujarat. The decision of Pir Nūr al-Dīn to associate the Vedantic principles with that of Ismā'ilism probably had official blessings. For as far back as the thirteenth century in a work known as *Haft Bābā Sayyidnā* one finds references to Indian gods Vishnu and Narain in their writings<sup>1</sup>. It means that the Nizāri *da'wat* from its very inception realized the difficulty of recovering the lost following in the face of internal dissensions, hostile orthodox Turkish rulers and *ṣūfī* missionaries. Therefore, they decided to win support among the non-Muslims by creating the impression that the Ismā'īlī beliefs were akin to local Hindu beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Satgur Nūr concentrated on Kolis and other low castes, the socially backward and under-privileged classes.

The Nizārian impact over the Ismā'īlī movement was also demonstrated in another field. They also started using violent and terroristic methods. The assassination of Muḥammad *Ghūrī* is attributed to them. Later they tried to stage coups at Delhi in the time of *Iltutmish* and Raḍiyah. Some scholars have identified Nūr Turk who led the abortive Ismā'īlī attempt at recovering power at Delhi with Pir Nūr al-Dīn.<sup>3</sup> However, this Ismā'īlī phase

1 *Haft Baba Sayyidnā*, (ed. Ivanow, Bombay 1933), p. 14. The book is said to have been written near 1200 A.C. (p. 2).

2 Najm al-Ghani, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

3 *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri*, Habibi, ed. Vol. I, p. 539. A controversy has developed around the personality of Nūr Turk. *Shāykh* Nizām al-Dīn Awliya speaks highly of him (*Fawā'id al-Fawā'id*, pp. 190-199. See also Ikram, *Āb-i-Kawthar*,



of violence and terror was short lived. The abortive coup at Delhi reflects their desperation, for unable to counter their opponents in Sind they embarked upon an impossible task of capturing power at Delhi. Selection of Delhi was, however, a clever choice. It had been recently subjugated and the majority of the population was still non-Muslim. The timing of the attempt was also perfect. The time of Friday prayers was ideal for such an attempt. It recalls to mind the Portuguese sack of Thatta in 1555 A. C. when only eight hundred Portuguese soldiers looted the whole city and returned with the richest loot of their lives.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Ismā'īlī attempt at Delhi was not so improbable as it seems at first sight. Moreover, this attack could have been a part of a larger scheme. The news of the capture of Delhi could be the signal for further Ismā'īlī attempts at Multan and Sind. Later converging attacks from Delhi and Multan could reduce Lahore to subjection. However, the whole project depended on the success of Delhi attack. That is why it was led by the *hujjat* himself in person. But Pir Nūr al-Dīn came to Sind in 1165 A.C. while the Delhi attack was made in 1207 A.C.

The destruction of Alamut by the Mongols compelled the Nizārī Imāms to go underground. As a result the *da'wat* became weaker. In the Subcontinent the Suhrawardi and *Chishtī* *ṣūfīs* were undermining the Ismā'īlī influence. The Rajput tribes in Sind and Multan were being won over to the cause of orthodox Islam. The new faith coalesced them into a powerful hegemony led by the Sammahs. Meanwhile the loss in the organizational and missionary work of the *da'wat* led the common men and others

(Continued from page 49)

pp. 385-387. He could not be Pir Nur al-Din because the latter is said to have arrived in 166 in Gujarat. The episode of Nūr Turk occurred in 1236. If Pir Nūr al-Dīn was still alive after a lapse of seventy years he could not be physically in a position to lead the attack. Sketchy evidence makes it difficult to prove conclusively that he was Nūr Turk, the scholar; *Cambridge History*, Vol. III, pp. 48-59.

1 *Tārīkh-i-Sind*, p. 207. *Tārīkh-i-Tāhīrī*, pp. 111-114. See also author's Thesis *Sind Under the Mughals*, pp. 457. et seq.

to go astray and fall into liscencious living, so characteristic of the Sūmrahs.<sup>1</sup> The cataclysmic changes in the course of the river were reducing eastern Sind to an arid desert. It compelled the Sūmrahs to shift their towns and population repeatedly till they became a people without much power and wealth. It may also be kept in mind that the Sūmrahs were already past their glory. They could have enjoyed unlimited power before the Ghūrid attack. But after the Ghūrid conquest and the subsequent establishment of Delhi Sultanate the regions of Multan and Sind became an integral part of the orthodox Muslim empire, in which they could have enjoyed a very precarious existence. An interesting feature of this period in the history of the Ismā'īlī movement is that except the unsuccessful attempt of Nūr Turk there is no instance of Ismā'īlī confrontation with the orthodox Muslims. Against heavy odds a studied policy of avoiding open rupture with the authorities seems to have been adopted. Such clashes could have been avoided only if the Ismā'īlīs co-mingled with the rest of Muslim population and lived disguised as orthodox Muslims.

The debacle of 1254 gave such a serious set—back to the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* that it took them a century to wear out its shock. Meanwhile owing to the policy of mingling with the orthodox Muslims and due to the work of the *ṣūfīs* the number of Ismā'īlī followers dwindled. The confused Ismā'īlī population unable to secure any guidance from their own missionaries were easy to be won over by learning, piety and love of the *ṣūfīs*. Among the Ismā'īlīs the loss of the central authority of the *imām* resulted in the accentuation of feudalistic tendencies. Morals became lax and

1 They were accused of drinking and forcibly seizing cattle of other tribes e.g. of the Sammahs *Tārīkh-i-Sind*, p. 61; *Firishṭah*, Vol. II, p. 317. *Tuḥfat al-Kirām*, Vol. III, pp. 83-84.

Folk tales speak of the high bardedness of 'Umar, the Sūmrah ruler of 'Umarkot and Dalū Rā'i the ruler of Alor.



obscure, mannerism<sup>1</sup> replaced the distinctiveness of the unity of belief.

Thus by the beginning of the seventeenth century in the eyes of the orthodox Muslims the Sūmrahs ceased to be *mulāhidah* and became identified with the Hindus.<sup>2</sup>

Faced with the growing challenge from the *ṣūfis*, orthodox rulers<sup>3</sup> and weakened by mutual internecine conflict the deviationist element in the form of greater syncretic propensity became pronounced. In fact they could either move closer or away from the orthodox Islam. The policy of living disguised as orthodox Muslims was fraught with grave dangers and could jeopardize their distinct identity, therefore, logic of survival led them more on the path of deviation and syncretism, which in turn lessened their appeal among the orthodox Muslims.

Now the syncretic tendencies became more pronounced with

1 They were said to have peculiar customs e.g. the removal of nails, giving up wives after the birth of the first child and discarding of clothes after using them only once. Haig (Ibn Batutah in Sindh, *J.R.A.S.* Vol. 19, p. 393) on the basis of these customs regarded them as Rajputs. (Cf. Daudpota, *Tārīkh-i-Sindh*, Notes, p. 286; Elliot, Vol. I, p. 486 *et. seq.*) However, those customs are neither Arab, Muslim or Rajput. In the region of Sind with its limited resources and population it would have been difficult to indulge in the luxury of wearing new clothes all the times. At the same time giving up marital relations with wives after the birth of one child also seems improbable in practice. Pulling out their own nails also defies logical explanation. Probably these were some local developments and could have been limited to some certain group or groups of the Ismā'īlīs. For cremation of the dead was also not practised by the Ismā'īlīs in general but only by one of their sects, the Imām Shāhis (Hollister, p. 260). Their aloofness may be due to their aristocratic airs as rulers of the region. Branding of slaves was nothing new and goes back to pre-Arab period when the rulers of Sind used to brand the Jats (Balādūri, Elliot, Susil Gupta, p. 30).

2 It is interesting to note that in 1470 they were not regarded as Hindus (*Mir'āt-i-Sikandari*, p. 126) but in the sixteenth century they were called Hindus (*Tāhīrī*, p. 46).

3 Firūz Tuḡhluq takes credit of uprooting heresy.

*Futūḥāt-i-Firūzshāhī*, Elliot, Vol. III, p. 377-378.

the passage of time. After Nūr Satgur came Pir Shams Sabzwārī (d. 1356). He used the gabra hymns to propagate Islamic tenets. He converted the Roshanias in the Panjab (now found in Multan, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Dera Ghazi Khan etc). They rever *Bhagvadita* and their religious books are called Atharv Vedh. They bear Hindu personal and caste names.<sup>1</sup> These Ismā'īlī efforts at revival in Gujarat and Uchh remained isolated.

By the fifteenth century they had become so weak that they could not make use of the approaching end of the first millenium of the Hijri calender, which gave birth to the messianic movement of Mahdi of Jaunpur and Dīn-i-Ilāhī of Akbar, for they were not waiting for any Madhi and *Qiyāmat*. For them *Qiyāmat* was already established. Nevertheless, they again showed a commendable and latent power of resilience and of staging recovery. They found a capable leader and organizer in their twenty fifth *hujjat*, Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn (1430<sup>2</sup>

1 Nizari, May 1940. pp. 2-3; July, p. 4;

Pir Shams Sabzwari came via Badakhshan and Kashmir and died at Uchh. Wide discrepancy marks his dates and he is placed in 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. In the absence of any conclusive evidence the date 1356 supplied by Ismā'īlī sources should be accepted. Pir Shams was 20th in the list of *hujjats*. (See Hollister, *op. cit.*, p. 324). His teachings were known as Shams Mat. Probably the teachings of Nūr Satgur were unknown in these regions. The success attending Nūr Satgur's efforts also could have induced the Ismā'īlīs to extend them to these regions. If successful the new scheme could become universal.

2 There was a controversy about Pīr Ṣadr al-Dīn and his son Kabīr al-Dīn in the last century. A section of the Khojahs claimed them to be Sunni Muslims (See A. S. Picklay, *Ismā'īlism*, appendix, the Khoja case, article 13, pp. 140, 153-158). In this respect the remark of Shāykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq in *Akhbār al-Akhbār* (p. 213) is interesting:

گویند کہ از وی خوارق عادت بوجود می آمدند اعظم و اشهر  
خوارق او اخراج کفار بود از کفر بسوئے اسلام و هیچ کافر را  
بعد از عرض کردن او اسلام را بروئے طاقت نماند و در قبول  
اسلام بی اختیار شد گویند بعضی از اولاد او بسبب موائی



who may be compared favourably with Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāh and Dhakrihi al-Salām in his impact on the movement.

The syncretic element traceable in the writings of Ḥasan b. Ṣabbāh and the works of Pir Nūr al-Dīn and Pir Shams al-Dīn found a more distinct and universal adoption in the Sat Panth of Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn. In his famous book the *Dasa Awṭār* (the ten incarnations) the prophets and *imāms* of Ismā'īlī theology are identified with Hindu gods.<sup>1</sup> He is also credited with better re-organization and is said to have instituted the *jhūlī* and the *jamā'at-khānah*.<sup>2</sup> The impact of his far reaching reforms was not confined to his own age but may be discerned for long time after his death.

The increased importance enjoyed by Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn was probably responsible for raising the status of the *hujjat* vis-a-vis the *imām*. At the same time the post of the *hujjat* for this region became hereditary, a development which not only weakened the control of the *imām* but later gave rise to further dissensions and rebellions. The hereditary nature of the office tended to in still awareness of their extraordinary importance. It resulted in a challenge from the family of the *hujjat*. It is said that either Pir Imām Shāh or his son Nūr al-Dīn, a grandson and great grandson of Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn were responsible for a split. The split occurred on the question of *das-*

(Continued from page 53)

نفس و دنیا به بد عتقا مبتلا شدند

Cf. Hafiz ul-Rahman, *Tārīkh-i-Uch*, p. 151.

See also *Fawā'id al-Fuwād* (pp. 198-199) for Nizām al-Dīn Awliya's good opinion about Nūr Turk.

<sup>1</sup> Najm al-Ghani, *op. cit.*, p. 334; Mujtaba Ali, *The Origin of the Khojachs and their Religious Life To-day*, Bonn, huding Robrscheid, Verlag, 1939, p. 42. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, Lahore, 1961, p. 278, Hollister, *op. cit.*, p. 357. Vide the khojah case, see appedix, pp. 155-157 in Picklay, *Ismailism*. The other books are *Ginan* also by Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn and *Pandyāt-i-Jawanmardi* by Imām Shāh.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the concept of *Jamā'at khānah* was present in the period of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya (1310) and was current in the sixteenth and seventeenth century under the Muḡhuls. See *Jama'at khāna Masjid*, Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, Bombay, 1942, pp. 18-19.

*sūndh* (10 % *zakāt*) and its remittance to the *imām*.<sup>1</sup> A ten percent charge on all the possessions ensured a lucrative income. Some scholars argue that the conflict with Imām Shāh was patched up and in fact it ocured with his son Nūr al-Dīn. But it may be pointed out that Imām Shāh moved out from Sind to Gujarat and the dissenters were called after his name as Imām Shāhīs.<sup>2</sup>

This serious split produced a great crisis. The dissenting group in order to maintain its identity had to either move closer to othodoxy or mover more towards syncretism. In the former case they could have lost their seperate existence, a fate which took over the dissenters of the Must'alian Ismā'ilis of Gujarat, who came to be known as Sunni Bohras or Ja'fari Bohras.<sup>3</sup> Or else they could identify themselves more with the Hindus. The identification with the Hindu Vishnavite beliefs had been completed under the leadership of Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn. The Imām Shāhīs could do no more but adopt some of the Hindu customs e.g. cremation of the dead.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding the pioneering efforts of Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn the Ismā'īlī *da'wat* continued to suffer set-backs. The gradual shift in the seat of the Ismā'īlī *hujjat* from Multan to Gujarat points to the decreasing popularity of the movement. Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn and his son Ḥasan al-Dīn Kabīr<sup>5</sup> remained at Uchh. The next *hujjat*, Tāj al-Dīn and another son of Ṣadr al-Dīn lies buried at Badīn while Imām al-Dīn moved into Gujerat. The Ismā'īlī beliefs retreated towards south-eastern border of Sind and by the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Some pockets might have survived in other areas of Sind. However, by this time both in Sind and Gujarat orthodox Muslim rulers and *murīds* of the Suhrawardi *ṣūfis* were in power.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hollister, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-359.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyelopaedi of Islam*, Inam Shah II, p. 474; Hollister *op. cit.*, p. 360-361.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Zafar Na'īwī, *Aqd al-Jawāhar fi Ahwāl al-Buwāhar*, Karachi, p. 122 *et. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Hollister, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

<sup>5</sup> *Akhbār al-Akhyār*, p. 213; Hollister, *op. cit.* p. 324.

<sup>6</sup> In fact Sultan Maḥmūd Bayagrah was a cousin of Shaykh Qu'b-i-'Ālam and was the grandson of Jamī Jūna, the exiled Jām of Sind. Sikandar, *Mir'at-i-Sikandarī*, p. 124.



Therefore, the Nizāri Ismā'ilīs could not find shelter in Gujarat also. Moreover, in Gujarat Sultan Maḥmūd Baygarah seems to have been friendly towards Imām Shāh and his followers.<sup>1</sup> While the Mūst'alian Ismā'ilīs were already there. Therefore, the Nizāri Ismā'ilīs remained confined to the border desert tract where they were often subjected to punitive proselytising expeditions from Gujarat. Sultan Maḥmūd Baygarah tried to teach them true Islam and sent a number of orthodox scholars to instruct them in the true faith (1472).<sup>2</sup> His attempts greatly weakened this movement.

Nevertheless in the absence of any recognised leadership the *da'wat* suffered further set-backs. The attempt to revive its failing fortunes by appointing Dāwd (also Dadu), a scion of a local family met with reverses. Dāwd was turned out of Sind and the Nizāri Ismā'ilīs had to shift their head-quarters to Gujarat (1594 A.C.).<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile shaken by the revolt of their *hujjat* and his family the Nizāri *imāms* tried to fill in the vacuum by a guide book, the *Pandiyāt-i-Jawānmardī* composed by Islām Shāh which clearly laid down the injunction that without payment of *zakāt* use of any good by their followers was *ḥarām*.<sup>4</sup> The Ismā'ilīs in Sind became scattered and continued to live in small and isolated pockets notably in Central Sind,<sup>5</sup> under their new name, the *Khojahs*.<sup>6</sup>

Hereafter all references to their existence cease in the annals. In the eighteenth century there are some references to the Memons. (Sunnīs converted from the Ismā'ilīs) living in Thatta and assuming airs of *ashrāf* and *akābir*.<sup>7</sup> The reference also shows that in

1 See Sh. Ikram, *Āb-i-Kawthar* pp. 396-397.

2 *Mir'āt-i-Sikandarī*, pp. 126-127.

3 Faridi, *Gazetteer*, pp. 66-69, 76-77.

4 *Pandiyāt-i-Jawānmardī*.

5 They lived in *parganah*, Pātar of *sa:kār* Siwistān (Sehwan) while those living in *parganah* Bubakān were regarded as non-Muslims, *Mazhar-i-Shāhjahānī*, Vol. II, pp. 65, 68.

6 Agha Khan, *Memoirs*, p. 21.

7 'Aḥḍā Tattawī, *Shahr-i-Āshūb*, pp. 230-231, vide *Tuḥfat al-Kirām*, Vol. III, p. 424.

انصاف توان داد کہ در شهر چه حال است چون میمن و تویمن شدہ اقبال پناہی

the feudal set-up the trading classess including the Ismā'ilīs enjoyed a secondary position.

When one comes to the nineteenth century one finds the Ismā'ili *imāms* living in exile in Sind; their warriors played an important role in the British conquest of Sind.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards the Ismā'ili movement enters the modern phase of its life, that is the emergence of a compact thriving minority among the Muslims of the Subcontinent.

The Ismā'ilīs of Sind occupied a prominent place in this region for nearly six centuries. Their contribution to the culture and civilization of this region was considerable, love and respect of the *sādāt* and esteem for *pirs* also seem to be one of the legacies of the Ismā'ili tradition. A large number of customs, rites and ceremonies which later became part of the Muslim society seem to owe their origin to Ismā'ili influence. Some of their influence may be seen in the traditions of Daryāpanthi sect.<sup>2</sup> The Ismā'ili missionaries tried to win following by substituting local religious literature by their own. One such example was that of Pir Shams al-Dīn who tried to replace the hymns of Shakti-panathīs by his own composition. As they had to preach to the common man they had to resort to the local language. The same method was to a certain extent used later by the *sūfis*. The Ismā'ili missionaries may be regarded as the earliest exponents of local languages. It may be emphasised again that all the popular folktales of Sind also belong to this period. At the same time the great synthetic trend of Sindhi culture owes much to the synergetic attitude and policies of those Ismā'ilīs.

1 The Agha Khan, *Memoirs*, also see Picklay, Chapf. X.

2 Some Daryāpanthi symbols such as palm of the hand is similar to the concept of *panjtan-i-pāk* of the Shi'ite and Ismā'ili beliefs. It may be pointed out that 'five lamps' are kept burning at the tomb of Shāykh Tāhīr, the Muslim version of Uderolāl at Nasrpur. Such dual personalities and names as Shāykh Tāhīr Uderolāl recall to mind the Ismā'ili practice.

See Abbot, Sind, Appendix A, pp. 100-101, Thakur, *Sindhi Culture*, Bombay, p. 131, *Tuḥfat al-Kirām*, Vol. III, p. 153.